



Ready for a Cut in Your COLA ?

After **Sharon Warren's** Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) briefing at a recent employees meeting, most BLMers learned that the tax free 25% COLA which is added to their paychecks will be reduced by 1% beginning January 2006. Besides the loss of money, Warren who is the Alaska COLA's Committee chair, explained what many Alaska federal employees already know – that retiring from Alaska means less money in your retirement pocket. First, the COLA is not included when figuring your retirement base and second, the base pay of federal employees in the Lower 48 has always been higher than feds in Alaska. Employees in other areas who receive locality pay **can** include that when calculating their retirement. So where does that leave Alaska retirees? Please note the following analysis.

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photo by Danielle Allen



Sandy Dunn, peers over a partition while **Nancy Pooley** contemplates upcoming projects. Pooley and Dunn were the drivers behind the Support Services conference. They wanted employees to learn more about what their division has to offer.

Fishing for Facts?

Are you one of those employees who grumbles about Information Technology when your computer goes down? Or do you think Human Resources takes too long

to process personnel actions? You should have attended the Support Services Conference, April 12-14, it probably would have

changed your mind about the division that serves the rest of us.

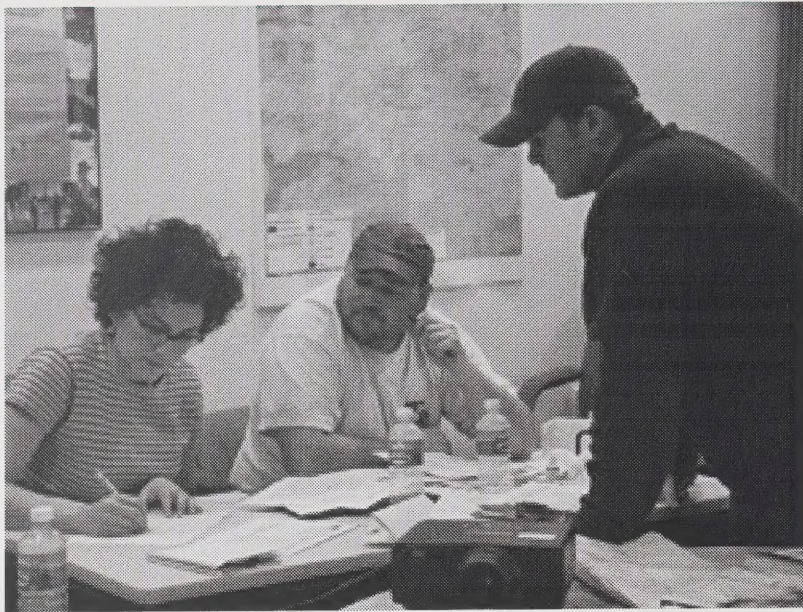
Sandy Dunn, the acting deputy for Support Services thinks the conference will reap huge benefits. "Too many employees view administrative functions with a lot of complaining and moaning." The idea of the conference came from acting branch chief **Nancy Pooley**, who, while brainstorming with Dunn reasoned there had to be a way to educate employees about their services. So **Susan Erickson**

continued on Back page

photo by Sandy Dunn



Susan Erickson



Working long hours at the recreation workshop were (l-r) Mary Farber, NFO interpretive spec, Collin Cogley, NFO outdoor rec. planner, and GFO outdoor recreation planner Cory Larson.

GFO Hosts Recreation Workshop

by Marnie Graham

The Glennallen Field Office hosted its first BLM statewide recreation workshop on February 28. Twenty participants spent three grueling days strategizing user groups, identifying special resource management areas and recreation management zones, and hashing out budget planning submissions. But evenings were filled with barbecued ribs and steaks, home-brewed musical entertainment, as well as a competitive but congenial 3-hour volleyball match. Fresh snow, warm temperatures, and

good-humored ambience rounded out the event, giving attendees a lasting taste of rural Alaska.

"I can just see myself pitching a tent and never returning to Colorado," exclaims visiting BLM Colorado State Recreation Lead Don Bruns. Scott Abdon, Washington Office BLM Senior Recreation Specialist, has been to Alaska before in the summer, but is enjoying a winter's look at this great landscape. "I have a much better understanding of winter recreation in Alaska after this trip." *Graham is an outreach specialist for the Glennallen Field Office.*

Rangers Lend Hand At Iditarod Sled Dog Race



by Teresa McPherson

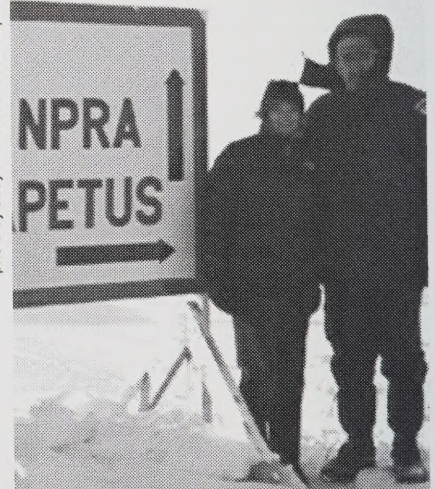
Anchorage and Glennallen field office rangers patrolled segments of the Iditarod National Historic Trail during the world famous Iditarod

Sled Dog Race from March 7-11. The rangers traveled by snowmachine between the McGrath and Rohn checkpoints, providing a BLM presence and safety assistance. The rangers also patrolled trail segments near the Native village of Unalakleet. The race officially began March 5 with a ceremonial start at BLM Campbell Tract in Anchorage. *McPherson is a public affairs specialist for the Anchorage Field Office.*

Fire Group Gets Earful

The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) sponsored 13 community meetings throughout northern Alaska following the record-setting 2004 fire season. It found residents questioning everything from policies on protecting structures, health and smoke considerations to funding staffs and facilities. Native communities were especially concerned about fire effects on traditional lifestyles and subsistence activities. About 300 people attended the meetings and all comments are being compiled to help define immediate and long term fire management actions. Summary documents are available under "Fire Planning on the Alaska Fire Service website: <http://fire.ak.blm.gov>. Agreements are being finalized for the upcoming season as Alaska's inter-agency fire community works to implement policies that address public concerns.

photo by Judy Patrick/ConocoPhillips



Sen. Lisa Murkowski and State Director **Henri Bisson** accompanied Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton on her visit to the North Slope in early March where she met with Alaskans in Barrow to discuss BLM's recommendations for leasing in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

Employee Profile

Awhile back, I approached Conveyances land law examiner Christy Favorite about an article for Alaska People. She was polite, but way too busy to be enthusiastic about the idea. A few weeks later, I sent her an email, and after no response, I decided to pay her a visit.

I found the diminutive Favorite in her cubicle submerged in every imaginable casefile. Her desk was layered with master title plats (MTP), open binders with yellow and pink highlighted text, and yellow post-it notes, and her computer monitor glowed with yet another MTP. Her tiny chaotic cubicle violates every Feng Shui principle, but she's one of the most productive and effective specialists in the division. After some persuasion, the super busy Favorite agreed to this story.

Your title is ANCSA Coordinator. What does that mean?

So far, it seems to mean part technical whiz, part advisor, part adjudicator of dreadful cases, part arbitrator, part instructor, part person-where-the-buck-stops, and part professional wet blanket.

Do you like what you do? I love it!

How long have you worked for BLM? 27.625 years -- since I was 12, in other words.

How long have you worked for Conveyances? Since September of 1978, when the division was created.

photo by Teresa McPherson



Christy Favorite

You're one of several experienced adjudicators recently promoted. Why do you think you were you selected for promotion? I was selected for the ANCSA Coordinator position in August 2003. Besides the promotion, my hat didn't so much change shape as it changed color -- less regular adjudication and more advising/guiding/special projects.

What's the pace in Conveyances like these days? It's a nice range from kinda frantic to completely insane.

Are there days you'd like to work in a less busy, less focused environment?

Sure. I stand on tiptoes and peer over the 5th Avenue parking garage at Mt. McKinley and think, "You know, maybe I should have become a rhinoceros milker, like daddy wanted."

How do you feel about all the new faces in the division? I think it's great to have new blood, fresh energy, other ideas. . . even though

I sometimes have to dampen the fires of enthusiasm so we can comply with those pesky laws and regulations.

What's the coolest thing you've done at BLM? My grandpa surveyed for BLM Alaska in the late 50s and 60s. Patenting one of his surveys is about the most fun I can have at work. Being involved in the Adak land exchange was way cool. I still really enjoy the vagaries and complexities of the Cook Inlet region.

Can you share something personal that most people don't know about you?

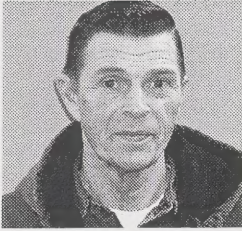
Sometimes people wonder about the name Favorite. It's a surname from my maternal grandmother's branch of our odd little family tree. The name was originally the German Fabritz, but was corrupted into such things as Faromite, Favrit, and, thankfully, Favorite. *Written by Teresa McPherson, public affairs specialist for the Anchorage Field Office.*

State Director's Safety Awards go to . . .

Five years ago, then State Director Fran Cherry decided to recognize employees that don't work directly in the safety program yet contribute to the safety of their co-workers. Hence the state director's safety awards were born and every year since, two deserving recipients have been selected by the safety committee

Award Recipients

photo by Doug Stockdale

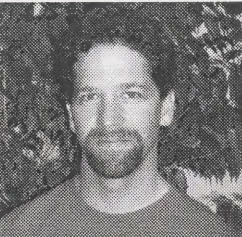


Lindsay Wyatt

As the supervisor of Alaska Fire Service's fueling program, Lindsay Wyatt ensures safe and efficient delivery of fuel to support the BLM mission in a wide variety of activities and under the harshest of environmental conditions. Wyatt maintains the fuel supply facility at AFS's ramp on Fort Wainwright, tests all fuel, and performs support for AFS-based aircraft for the fire season and project support for the northern portion of the State. The field offices are heavily dependent on Wyatt's section and accept the fuel supply as reliable, and properly tested. He performs required duties within the highest of standards and his commitment to safety has developed a fueling program second to none.



photo by Teresa McPherson



Jake Schlapfer

Jake Schlapfer, recreation planner for the Anchorage Field Office, earned special recognition for his work in the Watercraft Safety Program. For the last 10 years Schlapfer has been the Watercraft Safety Coordinator, instructing hundreds of BLM and other agency personnel through the DOI Motorboat Operator Certification Course. Watercraft activities in Alaska are potentially hazardous so it's important that employees operate safely on the water. The safety certification program is required by the Department and must be completed prior to an employee operating any watercraft. Schlapfer is BLM's state representative and in 2004, he became Program Lead on the National DOI Watercraft Safety Committee.



Nominees

photo by Teresa McPherson



Mike Nolen

Mike Nolen is an employee in the Branch of Field and Office Services. His contribution to employee safety began years ago as a lead instructor in BLM's non-law enforcement firearms program. For many years he has diligently trained BLM and other DOI agency personnel for potential hazards when working outdoors in Alaska. Nolen is an effective instructor of animal behavior and firearms safety and tests participants for shooting proficiency at the firing range. Handling firearms is a dangerous activity and regulated by Bureau policy. Nolen utilizes his experience with firearms to ensure his students understand policies and are prepared and responsible while carrying weapons on the job.



photo by Doug Stockdale

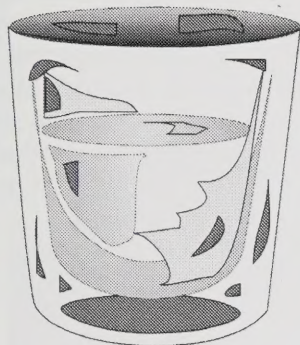


Kurt Huhta

Kurt Huhta is a Supervisory Land Surveyor in the Branch of Field Surveys. This past field season he managed a large cadastral field camp involving three helicopters in a mountainous area, a high-risk environment. He thoroughly understands the importance of running a safe operation and was continuously assessing and mitigating those risks. Huhta was innovative and aggressive in formulating an excellent field communication and flight following regime with a strict standard operating procedure. He also was instrumental in developing and preparing survival skills and equipment for the camp crews. The camp incurred no injuries related to the field operations.



Does the 8 by 8 rule still hold water?



A study published in the *American Journal of Psychology* in 2002 could find no medical evidence to support the 8 - 8 oz glasses of water a day." The study did discover through surveys of food and fluid intake conducted on thousands of adults of both genders suggest a large amount of water is unnecessary for healthy people.

Caffeinated drinks, and to a lesser extent diluted alcoholic beverages such as beer taken in moderation, may indeed be counted toward the 8X8 goal.

Drinking too much water can cause water intoxication, when the kidneys can't keep up with fluid intake. Water intoxication can lead to mental confusion, seizures and even death.

However, in some instances,

such as strenuous physical work or exercise and for the treatment of some diseases, the consumption of 64 oz. of water or more may be advisable. Talk to your doctor to find out how much water your body needs.

Bottom line: Our bodies are unique and have unique needs. Don't beat yourself silly slamming bottle after bottle of water. Listen to your body and talk with your doctor. Drink when you're thirsty. You may save yourself a couple of trips to the bathroom and free yourself from the guilt associated with not reaching the 8x8 goal.

Sources: Dr. Judith Recichman, NBC "Today" show medical contributor. Dr. Heinz Valtin, M.D., study published in the *American Journal of Psychology*, August 2002

COLA continued from front page

COLA and retirement

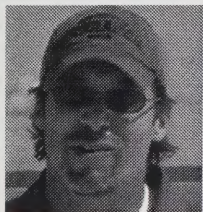
what does scott say?

by Scott Guyer

If an employee retires from Alaska with a high 3 average salary of \$75,000 their high 3 salary from Washington DC would be \$87,000. If their length of service was such that their annuity equaled 65% of their high 3 salary, it would result in an annual annuity of \$48,750 if retiring from Alaska and \$56,550 if retiring from D.C. The difference of \$7,800 is a significant amount of money, especially in retirement. Assuming a 25-year retirement would mean \$195,000 less for the Alaska retiree.

If each employee stayed in their respective job for 10 years at each location they receive the same pay for 10 years. Which one would have a better retirement? (Taxes based on married filed jointly)

Location	Annual Salary	COLA	Taxes	Net Pay
Anchorage	\$75,000	\$19,000	\$12,225	\$81,775
D.C.	\$87,000	0	\$15,225	\$71,775



Over the 10 year period the Anchorage employee with COLA would be taking home \$100,000 more than the D.C. employee. If we determine the future value of the amount at a modest 5% then

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what does sharon say?

by Sharon Warren

In January 2006 COLA will be reduced to 24 percent and will be reduced 1percent thereafter until it reaches 13 percent or the percentage of the COLA survey. I agree if you took all of the tax free money and used it all for savings it would be a better deal. However, there are two issues here. One is COLA which is an allowance program that measure the cost of living between D.C. and Anchorage, and the other issue is locality pay. In calculating locality pay there is the Rest of United States (RUS) category. Alaska is not even considered part of the United States in calculating locality pay. An argument can be made that the disparity of not receiving locality pay is apart from the COLA program. The basis of locality pay was to pay employees to account for inflation. An argument could be made that Federal employees in Alaska should be receiving RUS at a minimum in addition to the allowance program.



Cool News

Very Cool Photo Gallery

Ever since External Affairs displayed photos taken by volunteer Dennis Green at an open house in February, everyone seems to want his photos. Green, an accomplished photographer, took photos of BLM managed lands two summers ago. Recently a Green photo was given to the Solicitor's Office in recognition of their work with BLM.



Just Call Her "Doc"

Energy and Minerals program analyst **Leslie Torrence** was recognized by her co-workers in February for receiving her doctorate in Applied Management and Decision Sciences from Walden University. She specialized in leadership development and organizational change after four years of coursework.



Leslie Torrence



Danielle Allen

Visual Information Specialists Nominated As Best

Although **Charles Luddington** (middle) seems shocked, his former co-workers **Dwayne Richardson** and **Kim Mincer** are thrilled with their nominations as BLM's employee of the year in the group category. Other BLM nominations include **Lori Nelson**, Glennallen Field Office (category 1), **Shirley Goforth**, AFS (category 2), **Bruce Rodgers**, GFO (category 4). The Outstanding Federal Employee of the Year Awards ceremony will be held at the Hilton Hotel, May 4 in Anchorage.

New Mgmt Assignments

Congrats to **Gary Reimer** who is the new Anchorage Field Manager and **Ramona Chinn** the new DSD for Conveyances.

New Employee Association is Doing Business

After six months of deliberation the newly-created State Office employee association is sporting a charter, bylaws and new elected officers. **Carol Thrash**, the group's chairperson, says employees should be on the lookout for what the association has planned in the coming months — apple grams, spring cleaning silent auction and food fests. The association's primary purpose is to promote employee social activities. Rewards cards are being sold to help the association fund upcoming activities while giving employees discounts. Each division has two representatives. For more info, contact your division rep or Thrash.



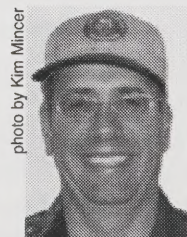
Carol Thrash
Chairperson



Belinda Coonrod
Vice Chair



Alissa Varrati
Secretary



Steve Politsch
Treasurer



Cynthia Bruss
Historian

photo by Kim Mincer

photo by Kim Mincer

photo by Kim Mincer

photo by Kim Mincer

photo by Kim Mincer

Comings

Britney Breaud, legal instruments examiner, Cadastral Survey
Jarad Bond, info. tech. specialist, IT, Support Services
Ronald Coleman, electronics mechanic, communications, AFS
Joseph Hart, realty specialist,
Edward Hearn, library technician, Juneau Mineral Info Ctr.
Sandra Martinez, Equal Employment Manager, EEO
Tracy Nicholson, fire support assistant, financial svcs, AFS
Sylvia Votion, admin support assistant, IT, Support Services

Goings

Michael Billbe, law enforcement ranger, Northern Field Office, retired
Sherri Belenski, land law examiner, Conveyances, retired

Alice Chavez, land law examiner, Conveyances, retired
Nichole Cummings, land law examiner
Sharon Deuter, land law examiner, Conveyances
Paul Fuselier, carto. tech., Geographic Sciences
Doug Gibson, archaeologist, Anchorage Field Office, retired
Donna Gindle, public affairs specialist, Anchorage Field Office
Christopher Gyden, fire support assistant, AFS
Bill Lewellen, land law exam. student
John Nelson, fuel distribut. syst. wkr, AFS
Sean Phillips, smokejumper, AFS
Askia Porcher, cartographic tech, Geographic Sciences
Susan Ryherd, grants & agreement specialist, Support Services
Frederick Sortman, fuel dist. syst. leader, AFS
Peter Stephenson, smokejumper

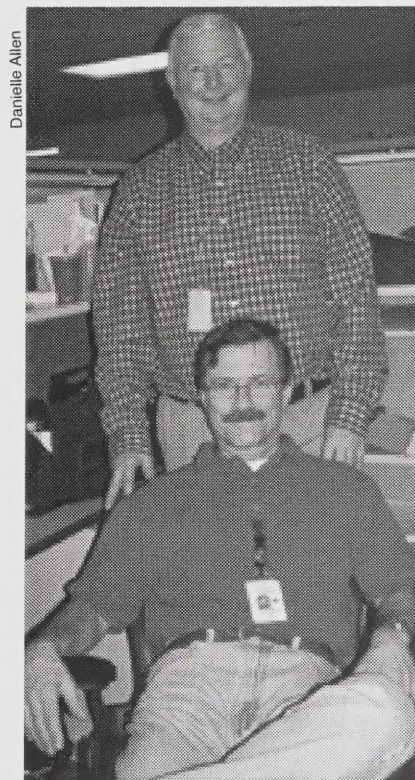
cian, AFS
Teresa McPherson, writer-editor, External Affairs to public affairs specialist, AFO
Richard Napoleon, office automation assistant, Joint Pipeline Office, promotion
Allen Palmer, chief, branch of tech systems, AFS, promotion
Vanessa Rathbun, visual info spec, External Affairs, promotion
Jason Robinson, cartographic tech, Geographic Sciences
Kari Rogers, wildlife biologist, Glennallen Field Office
Sandra Smith, grants and agreement specialist, Support Services
Gerald Snoozy, motor vehicle operator, Support Svcs
Timothy Lawlor, petroleum eng. technician, Energy and Solid Minerals
Alissa Varrati, contracting student trainee, Procurement
David Whitmer, fire management office, AFS

Transition

Scott Billings, fire management office, AFS, promotion
Rob Brumbaugh, geologist, Energy and Solid Minerals, promotion
Susan Childs, minerals and energy specialist, Energy and Solid Minerals, promotion
Travis Cooper, cartographic tech, Geographic Sciences, promotion
Julia Dougan, associate state director, promotion
Robert Fisk, minerals and energy specialist, Energy and Solid Minerals, promotion
Harrison Griffin, physical scientist, Energy, promotion
Andrew Heikkinen, land surveyor, Cadastral Survey, promotion
Vanessa Hice, land law examiner, Energy and Solid Minerals, promotion
Carole Huey, realty specialist, Northern Field Office, promotion
Wendy Longtin, editorial assistant, External Affairs to writer-editor, promotion
Cynthia McCarty, forest techni-

In Memoriam

Danny Dildine, former Conveyances adjudicator died Jan.25 in Reno, NV after a long battle with cancer.
Robert Jones, 65, former JPO contract compliance officer, died Dec. 24, 2004 in Peters Creek surrounded by family. Known for his raucous humor, he originated the Bureau's Resource Apprenticeship Students program.
Rita Kelley, 60, died Jan.1, 2005 in Olympia, Wash. She had an eight year career as a ASO land law examiner in the late 1980s.
Ann Pedersen, 71, former ASO land law examiner died Jan.11.
Ron Smith, passed away in mid January 2005. He worked in the ASO for many years in training/development before suffering a stroke in 1997.



Safety Duo to Say Adios. Safety officer **Mike Rose**, (standing) retiring later this summer recently was chosen to receive the Department of the Interior's Professional Service Award for Safety for his contributions to BLM's safety program. **Jim Mroczek**, Mike's trusted assistant for many years will retire in May.

Fishing continued from front pg
was brought on as the conference coordinator. Once the conference was a go, 35 employees offered to help out with presentations to Dunn's surprise. "It was impressive," says Dunn who held a planning session where some employees who have never given presentations were given pointers on goal setting and what to do.

Unexpectedly, preparations for the conference was a great team building exercise. "We had people working together who have never had any reason to work with one another," says Dunn. The 50 minute sessions ran the administrative gamut. Sessions included Worker's Compensation, Space and Supply Management to IT's highly touted video production starring **Jim Braham, Georgia Holton, Marcia Hunt** and others. Entitled "IT Came From the Fifth Floor," lived up to its hype of being amazing, exciting and spectacular! Dunn says

employees need information from Support Services and Support Ser-

vices needs info from them. This could be the beginning of a great relationship.

Guyer COLA, continued from page 5

value after 10 years would be \$125,780. As the example states, the DC employee would be getting \$7,800 more in annual retirement income per year than the Anchorage employee. However, the Anchorage employee would have earned (future value) \$125,780 more than the DC employee. The question is would it be better to have \$125,780 in the bank or \$7,800 annually? Lets look at how much each would have after 25 years of retirement.

Anchorage	= \$125,780 at 5% annual return
	for 25 years = \$425,941
D.C.	= \$ 7,800 annual annuity at a 5% return
	for 25 years = \$372,270

Based on this analysis as long as the employee stayed in Alaska at least 10 years it would be better to have the COLA than base pay. The advantage of locality pay would only be to those who were in Alaska for a few years. In most cases this would be higher grade employees who transfer between jobs more often. Changing from COLA to locality pay would disenfranchise those workers who work here for longer periods of time and at lower grades of pay. Therefore I recommend the Anchorage COLA Committee support COLA over locality pay.



Alaska People

Bureau of Land Management
222 West 7th Avenue, #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513-7599
①907.271.3335

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Danielle Allen *Editor/Writer/Layout*

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